

Introduction

1. We remember from 1:3 that when Paul left for Macedonia, he left Timothy at Ephesus with an important task: to prevent certain individuals from teaching false doctrine (1:3-4)
  - a. These men were enamored with Jewish myths, endless genealogies, mere speculations, and fruitless discussions
  - b. They fancied themselves as teachers of the OT Law and were apparently claiming that Christians needed to live in strict adherence to the Law in order to be saved
  - c. According to Titus 1:11, which was written by Paul about the same time, that these false teachers needed **“to be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain”**
2. This wasn't the only issue at Ephesus:
  - a. There was apparently wrath and dissention among some of the men
  - b. Some of the women were dressing and behaving inappropriately
  - c. And, there was even a problem when it came to teaching and oversight in the church, with some of the women assuming these roles over men
3. Verses 3:14-16 are seen by most as getting to the heart and soul of why Paul wrote to Timothy:
  - a. It wasn't just about the false teaching, the infighting among the men, or the improper behavior of the women
  - b. Those were all issues that needed to be addressed, but not simply for the sake of those individuals
  - c. Rather, Paul had in mind a much bigger picture: such behavior was improper for God's people and would prevent the church from carrying out its God-given purpose
4. In our passage today, Paul is going to address the importance and necessity of proper conduct for members of the Church and it comes down to three things:
  - a. The Church is the family of God
  - b. The Church is the Church of the Living God
  - c. The Church is the pillar and support of the Truth

A. The Church is the family of God (READ 3:14-15a)

1. Paul hoped to come to Timothy at Ephesus soon (14):
  - a. He doesn't say why he wanted to come but we can assume it was because he was concerned about what was happening at Ephesus
  - b. He spent three years there, so he knew these people well
  - c. The last time he saw the elders, he warned them that savage wolves would rise up from among them and mislead the flock
  - d. We see his grave concerns over what was happening at Ephesus not only throughout this letter, but in his second letter to Timothy
  - e. Paul's concern was apparently so serious that he felt he couldn't wait to address the issues himself, so he wrote to Timothy in case he was delayed

2. Paul's stated purpose in writing was so that Timothy would know **"how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God"** (15a):
  - a. There are a number of terms used in the Bible to refer to the Church:
    - 1) The first is obviously **"church"**: this comes from the Greek word ekklesia which refers to an assembly or gathering
    - 2) However, others include the **"body of Christ"** (1 Corinthians 12), **"the flock of God"** (1 Peter 5:2), **"the Bride of Christ"** (Ephesians 5:25-27), and even **"the temple of God"** (1 Corinthians 3:16)
    - 3) Each of these emphasizes a different aspect of the Church like we are many members but one body, or that we are like sheep with a shepherd, or the fact that the Holy Spirit dwell within us in much the same way that God dwelt in the tabernacle or temple
  - b. Here Paul uses another phrase, **"the household of God"** which emphasizes yet another aspect of the Church and it's the fact that we are part of God's family, we are members of His household:
    - 1) Because we are part of God's household, there is a STANDARD of conduct (e.g. behavior) that He expects of us
    - 2) Paul even uses a word that indicates necessity (**"ought"**) which means it's not a suggestion; it's an EXPECTATION that we behave in a certain way

We all know what this is like because we are all part of a household and we have standards we expect of our kids; mine are 1) that you don't dishonor Jesus and 2) that you don't embarrass our family

- 3) While Paul doesn't define here exactly what this proper conduct for God's people should look like, he does elsewhere:
      - a) In Philippians 1:27 he wrote, **"Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ..."**
      - b) In Ephesians 4:1 he wrote, **"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called..."**
3. Takeaway: once we became members of God's family—His household—He expected us to start behaving like it:
  - a. When I graduated from college and entered the professional workforce, I was expected to start acting like it:

In college: long hair, beard, t-shirt and blue jeans  
 Radio Sales: suit and tie  
 IT: suit and tie to dress casual

- b. The same is true of God's family when we become members of God's family; we are expected to stop behaving like we belong to the world's family and start acting like we belong to God's family (READ Ephesians 4:17-24)

**B. The Church is the Church of the Living God (READ 3:15b)**

1. There are a number of implications to this statement:

- a. One is that the Church belongs to God: we are **“the Church of the living God”**
    - 1) He purchased the Church with His own blood:
      - a) Acts 20:28: **“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”**
      - b) Revelation 5:9: **“And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”**
    - 2) The Church is His possession:
      - a) 1 Peter 2:9: **“But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”**
      - b) Titus 2:14: **“who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession...”**
  - b. A second implication is that because God is alive, He sees and cares about our conduct:
    - 1) Ephesus was a pagan city where the Greeks and Romans worshipped dead gods in temples filled with man-made idols of wood, metal and stone
    - 2) Dead gods can’t care about behavior; they can’t care about anything; they’re dead
    - 3) However, we worship a God who is alive, a **“living God”**, and He sees everything; He cares about us; He cares about our conduct and how we behave
  - c. A third is that because God is alive, we are accountable to Him:
    - 1) While this is certainly true of the unsaved, it is especially true of the Church because we are members of His family and His possession
    - 2) Hebrews 3:12-13: **“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”**
    - 3) 1 Peter 4:17: **“For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”**
2. Takeaway: if we served a dead God, our behavior wouldn’t matter; but we serve a living God and He does care about how we conduct ourselves, so much so that He is willing to discipline us (READ Hebrews 12:1-11)

<p>C. The Church is the pillar and support of the truth (READ 3:15c-16)</p>
---

1. There are two primary debates or disagreements surrounding this verse:
  - a. The first is whether the Church is **“the”** pillar and support of the Truth or simply **“a”** pillar and support of the Truth:
    - 1) Because there is no definite article (**“the”**) before **“pillar”** or **“support”** some argue that the Church is only **“a”** pillar and support of the Truth:
      - a) The ESV translates it this way, but it’s the only major English translation to do so
      - b) Proponents of this view suggest there are other pillars/supports like the Bible, general revelation, maybe even other forms of truth like science, etc.

- 2) However, every other English translations render it as “the pillar and support” because the grammar allows for it, and there are Biblical and contextual reasons to understand it this way
- b. The second debate is over the word “**support**”:
  - 1) The first word is “**pillar**” which refers to just what it sounds like, a pillar that supports the ceiling or roof of a building
  - 2) However, it’s not clear what the second word refers to:
    - a) The problem is it’s only used one time in the Bible and there’s no record of the word outside the Bible; that makes it hard to define
    - b) Some believe it refers to a foundation or the ground that a building rests upon (and this is the way most English translations translate it)
    - c) Others believe it refers to a bulwark or buttress which are built to fortify or strengthen the walls of a building (the ESV translates it as “buttress”)
2. My assessment is that Paul’s point is simply this: the Church upholds and protects the Truth, and this includes not just the Gospel, but everything God has revealed in His Word:
  - a. The Church is God’s agent, and through the power of the Holy Spirit we both proclaim and protect the Truth:
    - 1) First and foremost, the Gospel is Truth and we have been entrusted to not only confess it but proclaim it (READ 3:16)
    - 2) But the Gospel’s not the only Truth; ALL of God’s Word is truth and we have been entrusted to uphold that as well:
      - a) David said in 2 Samuel 7:28, “**Now, O Lord God, You are God, and Your words are truth...**”
      - b) He said in Psalm 119:160: “**The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.**”
      - c) In John 17:17, Jesus prayed, “**Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.**”
  - b. This idea of upholding and protecting the Truth is one of the main purposes of the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus):
    - 1) Paul begins 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy by instructing Timothy to prevent men from teaching strange doctrines (1:3ff)
    - 2) He defends the Gospel from the false teaching of works-based salvation in 1:8ff
    - 3) In chapter 3 he instructs Timothy to select the proper kind of leaders, including elders who can teach and deacons who hold to the mystery of the faith
    - 4) In chapter 4 he warns Timothy of the times to come when some will fall prey to false teachers and doctrines of demons, and warns Timothy to “pay close attention” to his own teaching
    - 5) In chapters 5 and 6 he warns Timothy again about the dangers false teachers pose to the truth
    - 6) He then ends the letter with these words (1 Timothy 6:20-21): “**O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called knowledge—which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith.**”
3. Takeaway: and this brings us back to the necessity for proper conduct in the church; our conduct matters not just because we are God’s family, not just because we are the Church of the Living

God, but because as the Church we are also the upholder and protector of God's Truth, not only the Gospel but all of what's been revealed in His Word:

- a. As individuals, we can't expect to impact people's lives with the Gospel or God's Word if we aren't committed to proper Christian conduct and living in obedience to Jesus
- b. As a local church, if we can't conduct ourselves properly toward one another, then proclaiming God's Truth with our words is nothing more than hypocrisy